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(54) **ONSCREEN FUNCTION EXECUTION METHOD FOR MOBILE TERMINAL HAVING A TOUCHSCREEN**

(71) Applicant: **Samsung Electronics Co., Ltd.**,
Suwon-si, Gyeonggi-do (KR)

(72) Inventors: **Wan Soo Lim**, Seongnam-si (KR); **Hyo Young Kim**, Seongnam-si (KR); **Dok Shin Lim**, Seoul (KR); **Kyoung Ae Lim**, Seoul (KR); **Min Suk Kim**, Seoul (KR); **Young Sun Shin**, Seoul (KR); **Hee Kyung Jeon**, Seoul (KR)

(73) Assignee: **Samsung Electronics Co., Ltd.**,
Suwon-si (KR)

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G06F 3/041; G06F 3/044; G06F 3/04883

USPC 345/173-178; 178/18.01-18.09,
178/20.01-20.04

See application file for complete search history.

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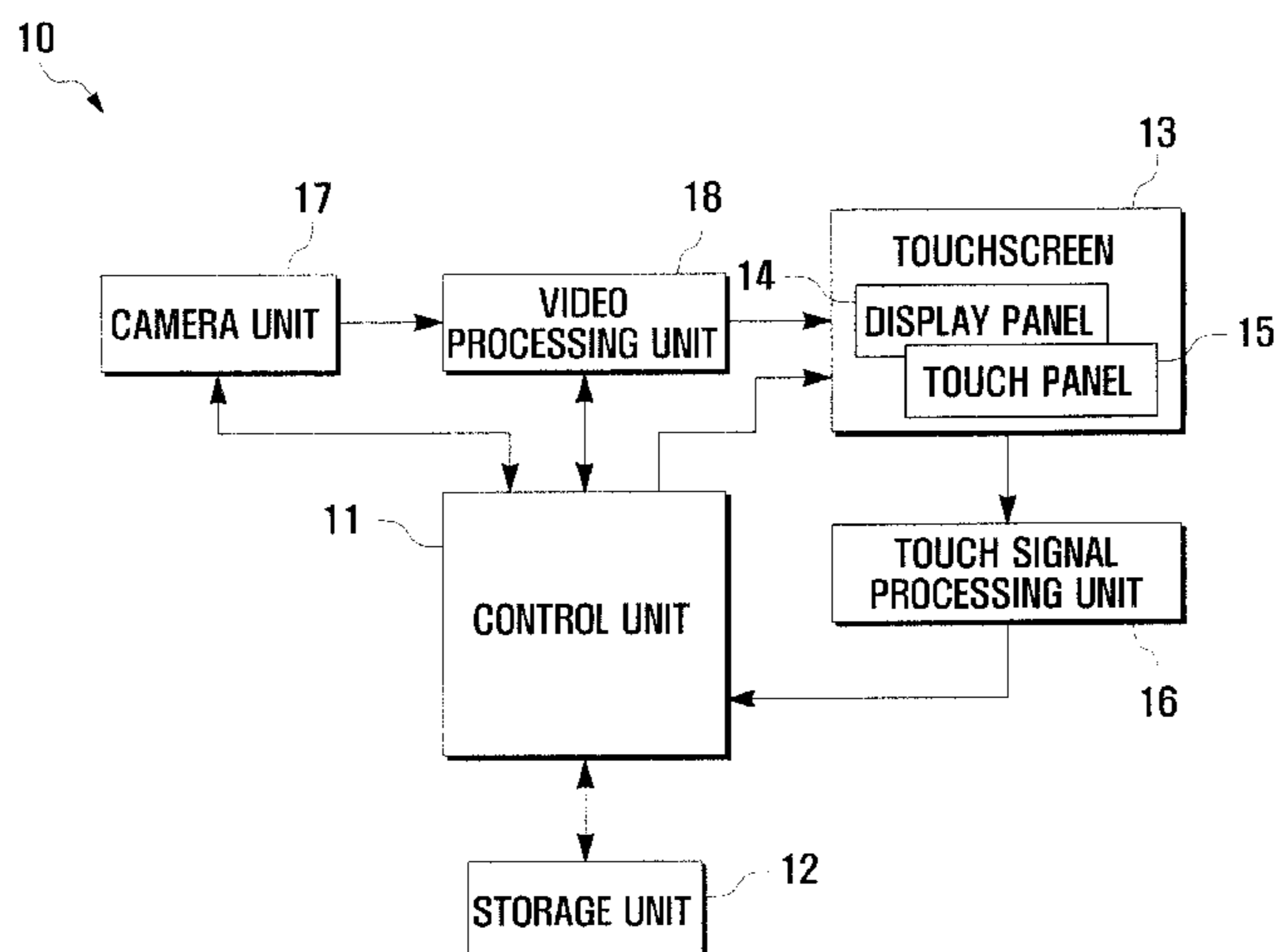
Primary Examiner — Vijay Shankar

(74) *Attorney, Agent, or Firm* — Jefferson IP Law, LLP

(57) **ABSTRACT**

An onscreen function execution method for a mobile terminal having a touchscreen is provided. The method allows for executing functions of an activated application by a tap on a specific area of the touchscreen. An onscreen function execution method of the present invention includes mapping active regions of the touchscreen to functions of at least one application, displaying an application screen in response to an application activation command and executing, if a tap is detected on one of the active regions, a function mapped to the application activation command. The active regions may include a function execution display region and the applications may comprise a camera application, a music player application, an idle mode screen application and the like. The method allows a user to execute functions of an activated application by tap on the touchscreen.

20 Claims, 5 Drawing Sheets



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FIG. 1

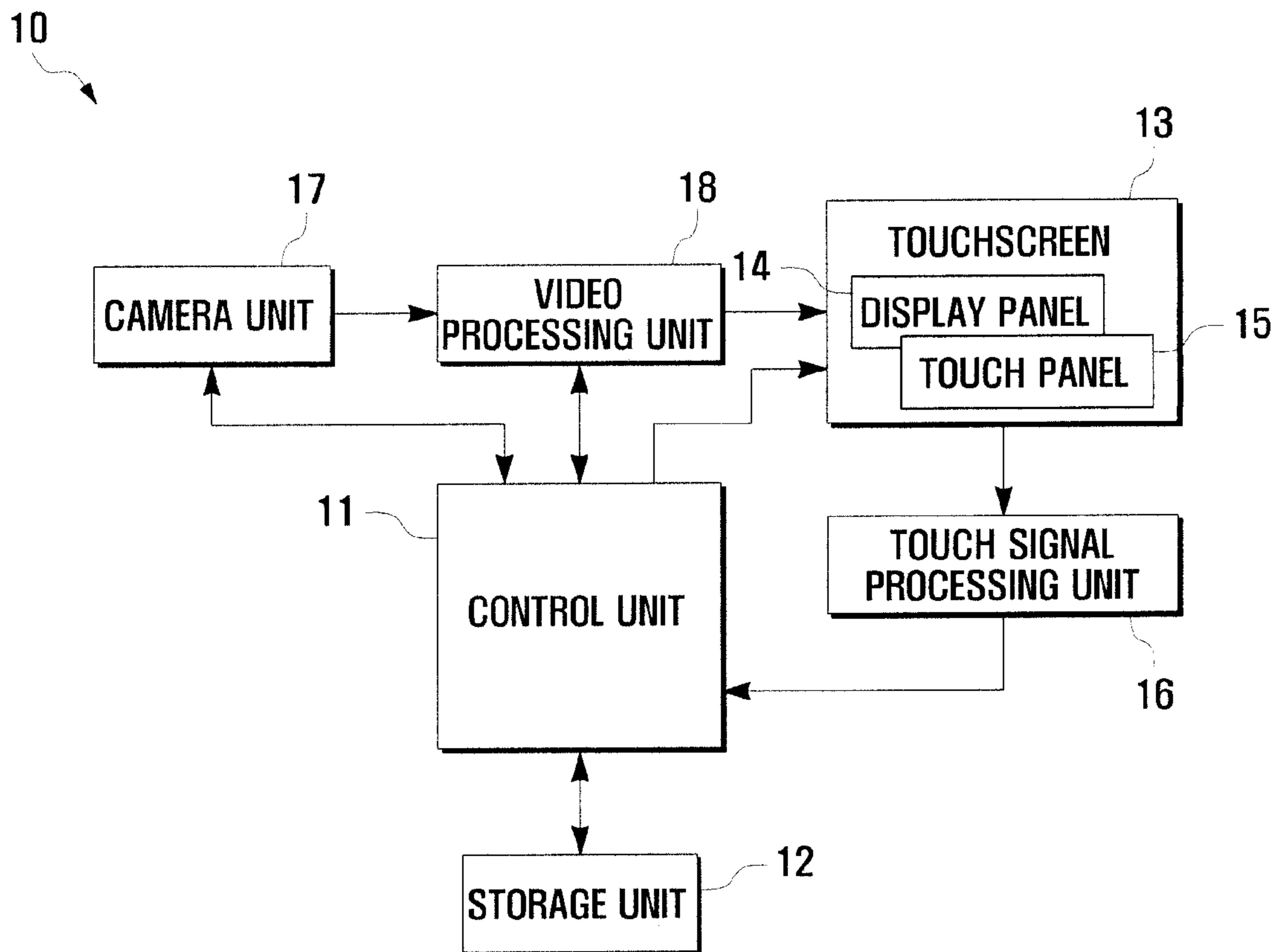


FIG . 2

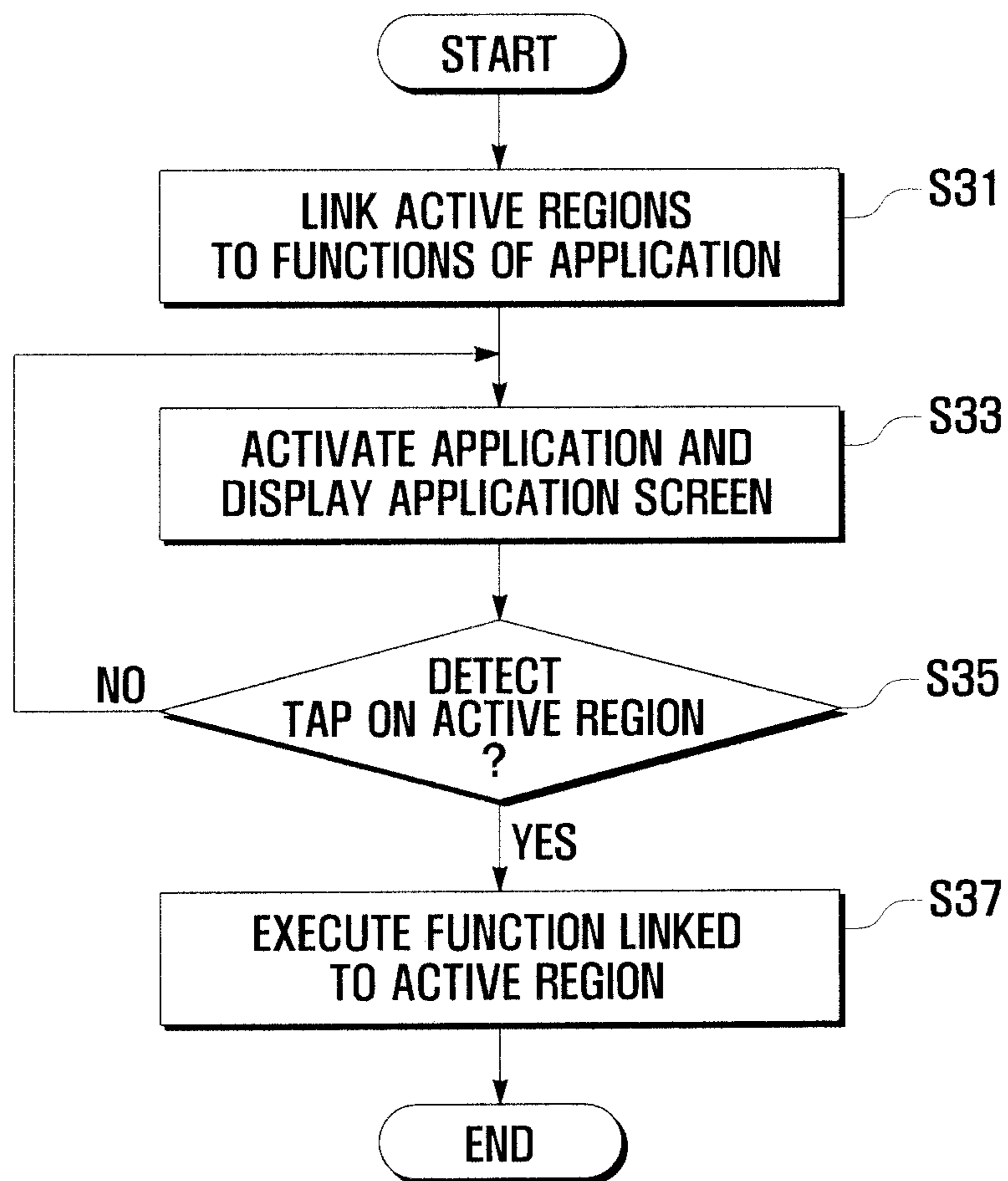


FIG. 3

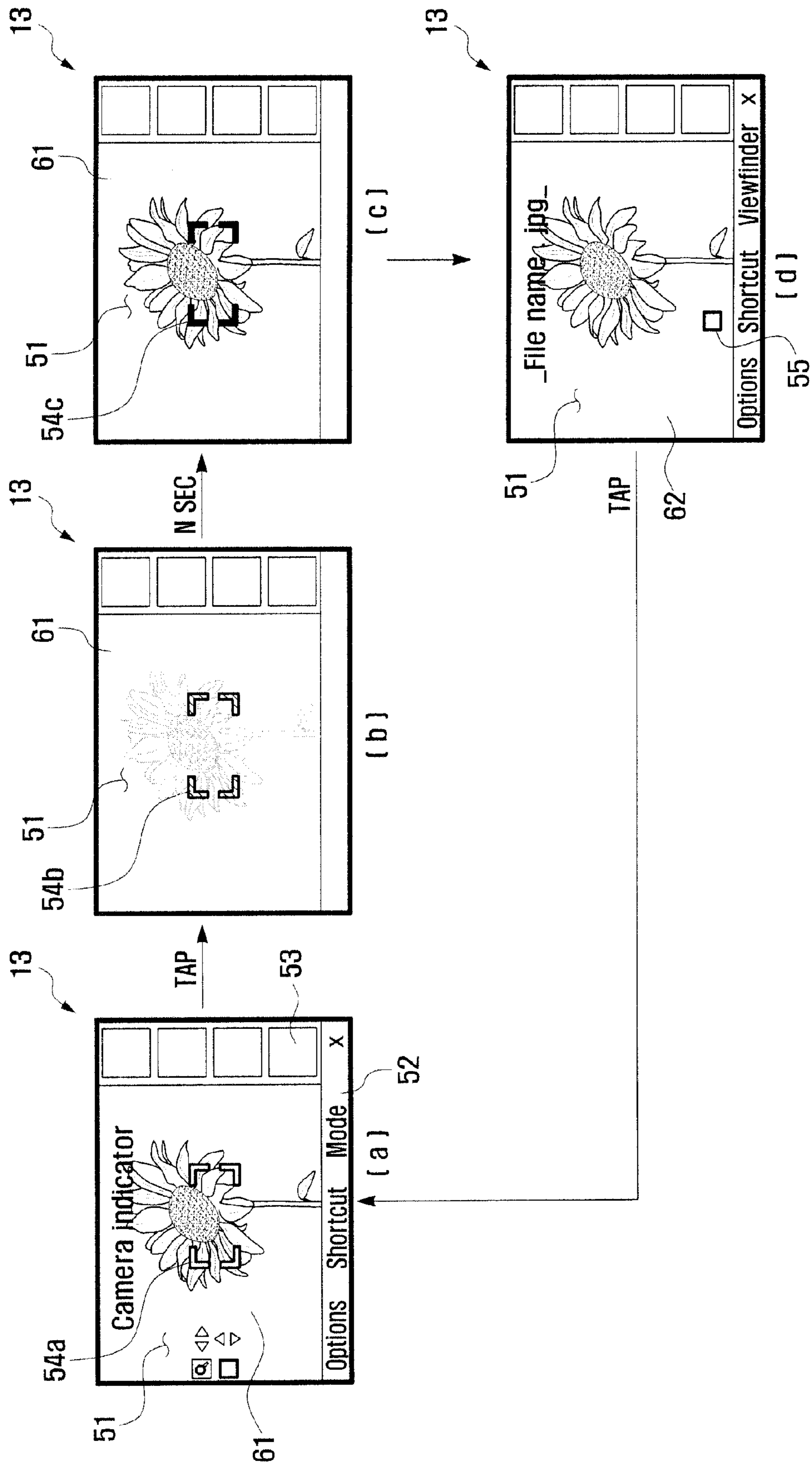


FIG. 4

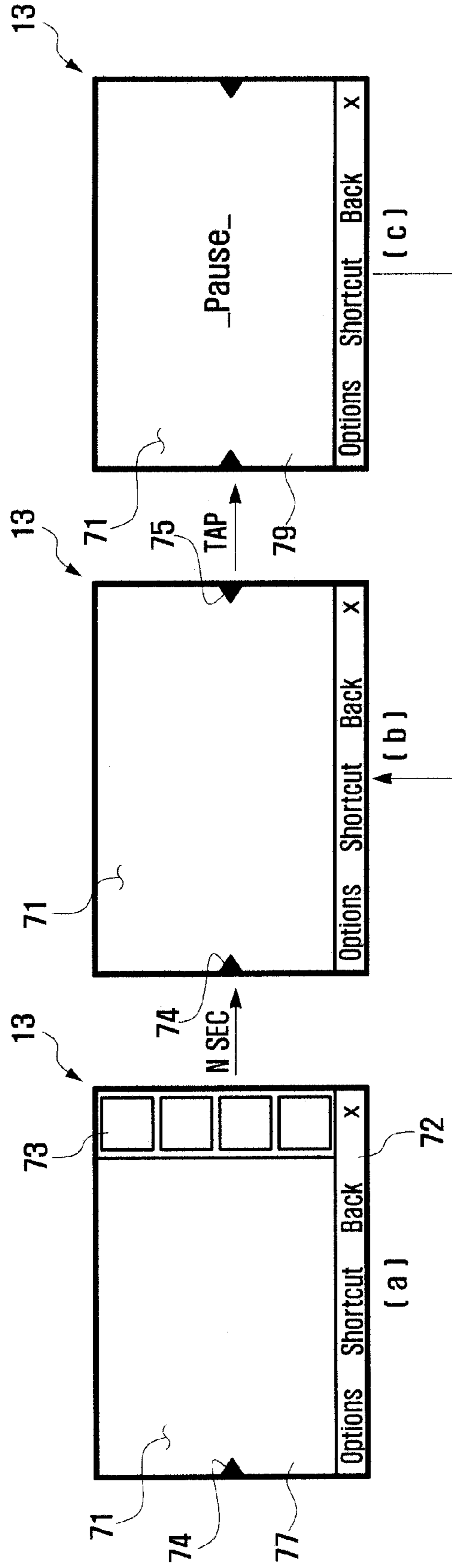
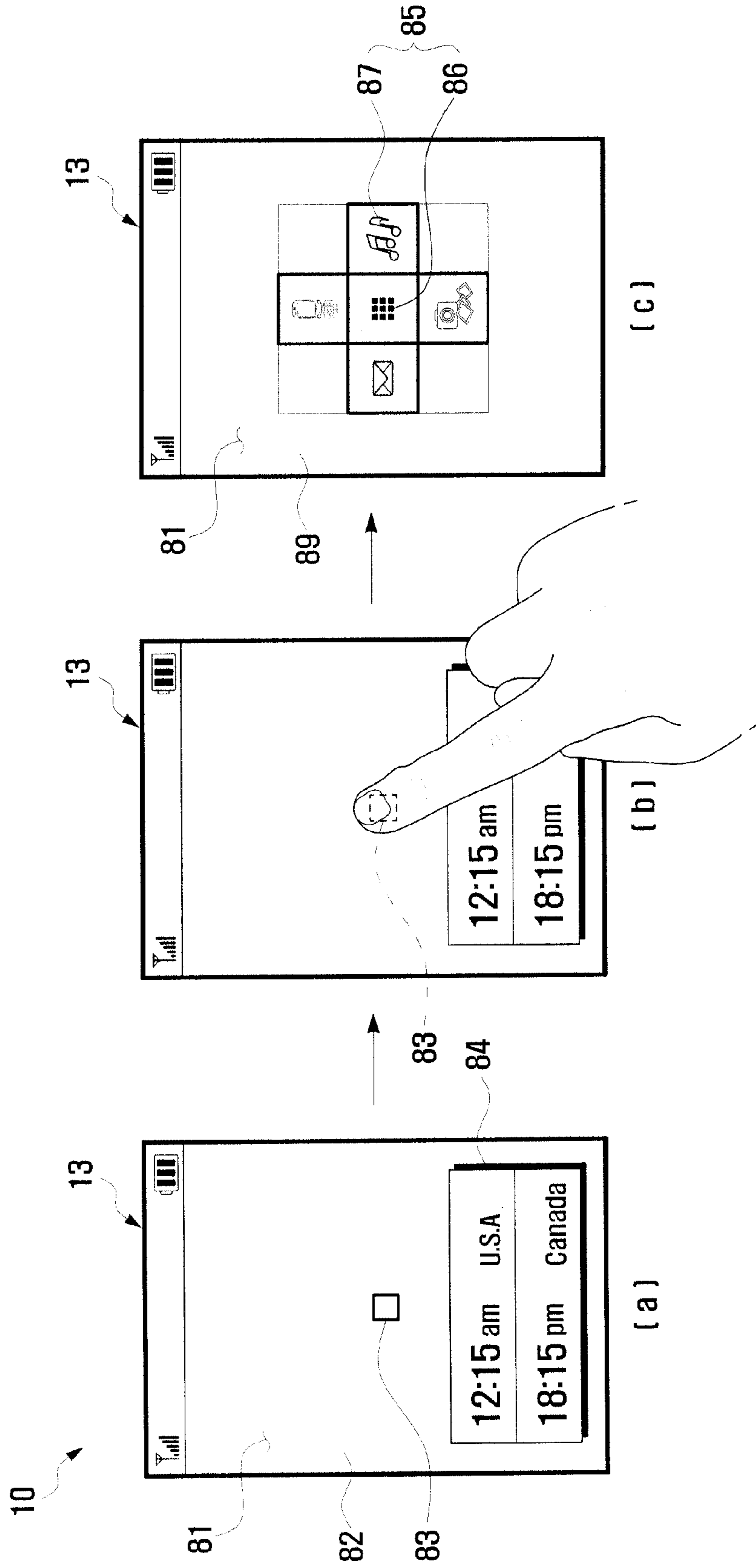


FIG. 5



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ONSCREEN FUNCTION EXECUTION METHOD FOR MOBILE TERMINAL HAVING A TOUCHSCREEN

CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATION(S)

This application is a continuation application of a prior application Ser. No. 12/014,056, filed on Jan. 14, 2008, which claimed the benefit under 35 U.S.C. §119(a) of a Korean patent application filed in the Korean Intellectual Property Office on Feb. 8, 2007 and assigned Serial number 2007-0013448, the entire disclosure of which is hereby incorporated by reference.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

1. Field of the Invention

The present invention relates to an onscreen function execution method for a mobile terminal. More particularly, the present invention relates to a method for executing functions of an activated application by tapping on a specific area of a touchscreen of a mobile terminal.

2. Description of the Related Art

With the advance of computing and wireless technologies, mobile terminals can now provide personalized features with various embedded application programs as well as basic voice communication. These mobile application programs include a personal scheduler, a short message service (SMS), a built-in camera application, a multimedia player, a documenter reader, games, etc., such that a user can manipulate various types of user data such as pictures taken by the camera, downloaded still and motion pictures, text messages, electronic books, ring tones, sound files (e.g., MP3), game contents and the like. Furthermore, the mobile terminal can be a mobile phone, a Personal Digital Assistant (PDA), a Portable Multimedia Player (PMP), etc. enabled by a wireless communication function.

Recently, touchscreens are being widely used as input devices for mobile terminals. A touchscreen allows a user to activate applications and execute functions by touching icons or elements displayed on the screen. The touchscreen is simple to use and improves user convenience in comparison with a conventional keypad.

However, the conventional touchscreen is limited in its effectiveness since it requires a user to become familiar with the manipulation of onscreen icons and menu bars and sometimes requires a series of complicated touch events for executing a specific function.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

An aspect of the present invention is to address the above-mentioned problems and/or disadvantages and to provide at least the advantages described below. Accordingly, an aspect of the present invention is to provide an onscreen function execution method for a mobile terminal that is capable of intuitively executing functions of an activated application by a tap on the touchscreen.

In accordance with an aspect of the present invention, an onscreen function execution method for a mobile terminal having a touchscreen is provided. The onscreen function execution method of the present invention includes mapping an active region of the touchscreen to a function of an application, displaying an application screen in response to an

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application activation command and executing, if a tap is detected on the active region, a function mapped to the active region.

In accordance with a further aspect of the present invention, a mobile terminal having a touchscreen is provided. The mobile terminal includes a control unit for mapping an active region of the touchscreen to a function of at least one application and for executing, if a tap is detected on the active region, the function mapped to the active region and a display unit for displaying an application screen in response to an application activation command.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

The above and other aspects, features and advantages of certain exemplary embodiments of the present invention will be more apparent from the following detailed description taken in conjunction with the accompanying drawings, in which:

FIG. 1 is a block diagram illustrating a configuration of a touchscreen-enabled mobile terminal having an onscreen function execution method according to an exemplary embodiment of the present invention;

FIG. 2 is a flowchart illustrating an onscreen function execution method according to an exemplary embodiment of the present invention;

FIG. 3 is a diagram illustrating steps of an onscreen function execution method according to an exemplary embodiment of the present invention;

FIG. 4 is a diagram illustrating steps of an onscreen function execution method according to another exemplary embodiment of the present invention; and

FIG. 5 is a diagram illustrating steps of an onscreen function execution method according to another exemplary embodiment of the present invention.

Throughout the drawings, it should be noted that like reference numbers are used to depict the same or similar elements, features and structures.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF EXEMPLARY EMBODIMENTS

The following description with reference to the accompanying drawings is provided to assist in a comprehensive understanding of exemplary embodiments of the invention as defined by the claims and their equivalents. It includes various specific details to assist in that understanding but these are to be regarded as merely exemplary. Accordingly, those of ordinary skill in the art will recognize that various changes and modifications of the embodiments described herein can be made without departing from the scope and spirit of the invention. Also, descriptions of well-known functions and constructions are omitted for clarity and conciseness.

Mobile Terminal Having Touchscreen

FIG. 1 is a block diagram illustrating a configuration of a touchscreen-enabled mobile terminal 10 having an onscreen function execution method according to an exemplary embodiment of the present invention.

Referring to FIG. 1, the mobile terminal 10 includes a control unit 11, a storage unit 12, a touchscreen 13, a touch signal processing unit 16, a camera unit 17, and a video processing unit 18.

The control unit 11 controls general operations of the mobile terminal. For example, the control unit 11 controls the

executing of functions by an activated application program in response to input made by tapping on a specific area of the touchscreen.

The storage unit **12** stores application programs for the mobile terminal and data generated while an application program runs under an operating system. For example, the storage unit **12** stores the application program associated with function execution and data generated while the application program operates.

The touchscreen **13** is provided with a display panel **14** and a touch panel **15** installed on the display panel **14**. The touchscreen **13** displays operation status information and data stored in the storage unit **12** in the form of various application screens and generates signals in response to a tap detected on the touch panel **15**. In an exemplary embodiment, the touchscreen **13** is configured to change the application screen in response to a tap. However, other changes may also occur in response to a tap. For example, an application may be controlled by the tap without a change in the screen appearance.

The touch signal processing unit **16** analyzes the signal generated by the touchscreen and outputs position data corresponding to the signal to the control unit **11**. That is, the touch signal processing unit **16** determines whether a tap is detected on a specific area of the touchscreen and outputs the position data corresponding to the tap to the control unit **11**. In an exemplary implementation, the signal is an electric analog signal. However, other signals, such as a digital electric signal, are also within the scope of the invention.

The camera unit **17** takes a picture and outputs the picture as image data. That is, the camera unit **17** captures still or moving images according to its operation mode selected by a user. The mode selection may be made by a touch on the touchscreen. The camera unit **17** includes an image sensor for converting an object image into an electric analog signal and a signal processor for converting the analog signal into a digital signal.

The video processing unit **18** processes the video signal output by the camera unit **17** to be displayed on the touchscreen **13**.

The touch panel **15** is provided with active regions mapped to functions of the application program. If a tap is detected at an active region on the touch panel **15**, the control unit **11** performs a function mapped to the active region on which the tap is detected.

The application programs may include an image recoding program associated with the camera unit **17**, a music player program, an idle mode screen program and the like that are activated in respective operation modes, i.e. camera mode, music player mode, idle mode and the like. As an example, if the mobile terminal enters a music player mode, the control unit **11** activates the music player program such that music files, for example MP3 files, can be played. As another example, in the idle mode, the control unit **11** activates the idle mode screen program such that an idle mode screen is displayed on the touchscreen **13**. The idle mode screen program may include application icons representing application programs, menu bars for executing functions of the application programs, function icons and the like.

The idle mode screen can be configured with frequently executed functions of specific application programs. For example, at least one of a preview function, a focusing function, a shutter release function, a save function and the like can be selected as frequently executed functions in the camera mode. In the idle mode, the specific functions can be presented in the form of application icons on the idle mode screen.

An active region is a region for presenting an execution status of a function of an activated application program, that is, a function execution display region. For example, the active region can be a frame showing a viewfinder image and a captured image in the camera mode. In the music player mode, the active region may be used to show an image associated with a music file. In the idle mode, the active region may be used to show an idle mode screen image.

Tap-Based Function Execution

FIG. 2 is a flowchart illustrating an onscreen function execution method according to an exemplary embodiment of the present invention.

Referring to FIGS. 1 and 2, the control unit **11** links the active regions of the touchscreen **13** to specific functions of the applications in step S31. The linkage between the functions and active regions are configured at the manufacturing phase of the mobile terminal or can be configured by a user afterward.

If a selection command is generated by touching the touchscreen **13**, the control unit **11** controls such that an application program is activated and an application screen is displayed on the touch screen in step S33. In an exemplary implementation, the selection command may be generated by touching an application icon on the touch screen wherein the application program is represented by the application icon.

After the application program is activated, the control unit determines whether a tap event occurs on an active region of the touch screen **13** in step S35. If no tap event is detected, the control unit **11** maintains the displaying of the application screen in step S33.

If a tap event is detected on an active region, the control unit **11** executes a function linked to the active region in step S37. At this time, a function execution screen can be displayed on the touchscreen **13** under the control of the control unit **11**.

First Exemplary Embodiment

FIG. 3 is a diagram illustrating steps of an onscreen function execution method according to an exemplary embodiment of the present invention. In this embodiment, the mobile terminal operates in a camera mode.

If a camera application is activated, for example by touching a camera application icon on the touchscreen **13**, the control unit **11** enables the camera unit **17**. The control unit also displays a viewfinder image **61** of the camera unit **17** on a viewfinder region **51** of the touchscreen **13** as shown in a screen image (a) of FIG. 3. The viewfinder region **51** is provided with a focusing bracket **54a**. At this time, the touchscreen **13** presents function icons **53** and a menu bar **52** associated with the camera application program. In an exemplary embodiment as illustrated, the function icons **53** are arranged at the right side of the touchscreen **13** and the menu bar **52** is arranged at the bottom of the screen **13**. Of course, it is noted that the function icons **53** as well as the menu bar **52** may be arranged at any of the sides of the screen or located elsewhere on the screen. Alternatively, the function icons **53** and menu bar **52** may be displayed on another screen.

If a tap is detected at the viewfinder region **51**, the control unit **11** locks the image **61** for a predetermined time (N seconds, where N is a real number) as shown in screen images (b) and (c) of FIG. 3. Finally, the control unit **11** records the viewfinder image **61** as a captured image **62** as shown in screen image (d) of FIG. 3. At this time, the captured image **62** is displayed in the viewfinder region **51** and function icons **55** associated with processing the captured image **62** are pre-

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sented at the left side of the touchscreen **13** (for example, an image transmission function icon, an image enlargement function icon and the like).

If a tap is detected on the captured image **62**, the control unit **11** controls such that the viewfinder image **61** is shown in the viewfinder region **61** as shown in the screen image (a) of FIG. **3**.

In order for a user to recognize the function execution status in the camera mode, the focusing bracket can be presented in a different manner as illustrated by **54a**, **54b**, and **54c** in images (a), (b) and (c) respectively. In an exemplary embodiment, the function execution status of the camera mode is indicated by markings of the focusing bracket **54a**, **54b**, and **54c** as shown in the screen images (a), (b), and (c) of FIG. **3**. When the captured image is displayed, no focusing bracket appears as shown in screen image (d) of FIG. **3**.

In this manner, the series of steps from focusing to recording an image can be performed using a series of tapping actions on the touchscreen. That is, the frequently used functions including focusing, capturing, and storing an image can be intuitively performed by simply using tapping actions.

Although a series of commands are individually executed by each tap in this exemplary embodiment, the present invention is not limited thereto. For example, the onscreen function execution method can be implemented such that a series of commands are executed by a single tap. In this case, the commands are executed in a sequential order and the focusing function can be omitted.

Second Exemplary Embodiment

FIG. **4** is a diagram illustrating steps of an onscreen function execution method according to another exemplary embodiment of the present invention. In this exemplary embodiment, the mobile terminal operates in a music player mode.

If a music player application is activated, for example by touching a music player application icon, the control unit **11** plays a music file and presents an image **77** associated with the music file in a main image region **71** as shown in screen images (a) and (b) of FIG. **4**. At this time, the touchscreen **13** presents function icons **73** and a menu bar **72** associated with the music player program. In this exemplary embodiment, the function icons **73** are arranged at the right side of the touchscreen **13** and the menu bar **72** is arranged at the bottom of the touchscreen **13**. It is again noted that the function icons **73** as well as the menu bar **72** may be arranged at any of the sides of the screen or located elsewhere on the screen. Alternatively, the function icons **73** and menu bar **72** may be displayed on another screen.

As illustrated in image (b) of FIG. **4**, if a predetermined time (N seconds, where N is a real number) is elapsed, the function icons **73** disappear and an arrow tip **75** for recalling the function icons **73** appears on the right side of the screen. Another arrow tip **74** may appear at a left side of the touchscreen **13** and is provided for calling available music files or a music album and indicates that a music file is playing. Of course, although arrow tips are illustrated, this is merely exemplary, as is the location of the arrow tips.

If a tap is detected at the main image region **71**, the control unit **11** pauses playing the music file and shows a text "Pause" in the main image region **71** as shown in a screen image (c) of FIG. **4**.

If a tap is detected while the music is paused, the control unit **11** plays the music file again as shown in the screen image (a) or (b).

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In this manner, the user can stop or play the music file by tapping on the touchscreen **13** in the music player mode. That is, starting and stopping playback of a music file can be intuitively controlled by tapping the touchscreen. It should be noted that while the above exemplary embodiment has described a feature wherein a music file is paused or played depending on a tap on the touchscreen, this is only an example of the present invention. A tap on the touchscreen may be used to control other or additional functions in the music player mode. For example, a tap may be used to forward or rewind through a playing music file, to skip to the next or previous file, to skip to the next or previous album, or other features as a user may desire to incorporate.

Third Exemplary Embodiment

FIG. **5** is a diagram illustrating steps of an onscreen function execution method according to another exemplary embodiment of the present invention. In this exemplary embodiment, the mobile terminal operates in the idle mode.

While the mobile terminal operates in the idle mode, the control unit **11** displays an idle mode screen **82** having a growing point or display starting point **83** in a display region **81** as shown in a screen image (a) of FIG. **5**. The starting point **83** is located at a center of the idle mode screen **82**. At the bottom of the touchscreen **13**, a clock **84**, a calendar, a music player icon and the like may be arranged. Although not shown in FIG. **5**, the calendar and music player icon as well as the clock **84** can be presented in a sequential order.

If a tap is detected at the starting point **83** on the touchscreen **13**, the control unit **11** controls such that application icons **85** appear on the display region **81** as shown in a screen image (c) of FIG. **5**. In an exemplary implementation, the applications represented by the application icons **85** are frequently used applications. The application icons may include a primary application icon **86** positioned at the center of the touchscreen **13** and secondary application icons **87** arranged around the primary application icon **86**. In the illustrated example of screen image (c), the primary application icon **86** is a main menu icon and the secondary application icons **87** include a camera application icon, music player icon, message service icon, and voice communication icon.

Of course, different icons and a different number of icons may be displayed in various arrangements beyond the arrangement illustrated in image (c) of FIG. **5**. For example, in the illustrated exemplary embodiment, each application icon has a rectangular shape and the secondary application icons **87** are arranged along the four side of the primary application icon **86**. However, the application icons can be modified in shape and arranged in different formation. For example, the application icons can be provided in the form of grid, rings, eclipses, circles, or polygons. Moreover, the number and types of icons, including the functions they represent, may be chosen and set by the user.

Although not shown in FIG. **5**, if a touch is detected on an application icon, the control unit **11** activates an application program represented by the application icon.

Certain aspects of the present invention can also be embodied as computer readable code on a computer readable recording medium. A computer readable recording medium is any data storage device that can store data which can be thereafter read by a computer system. Examples of the computer readable recording medium include read-only memory (ROM), random-access memory (RAM), CD-ROMs, magnetic tapes, floppy disks, optical data storage devices, and carrier waves (such as data transmission through the Internet). The computer readable recording medium can also be distributed over

network coupled computer systems so that the computer readable code is stored and executed in a distributed fashion. Also, functional programs, code, and code segments for accomplishing the present invention can be easily construed by programmers skilled in the art to which the present invention pertains.

Although exemplary embodiments of the present invention have been described in detail hereinabove, it should be clearly understood that many variations and/or modifications of the basic inventive concepts herein taught which may appear to those skilled in the present art will still fall within the spirit and scope of the present invention, as defined in the appended claims and their equivalents.

As described above, the onscreen function execution method of the present invention allows for intuitively executing functions of application programs by tapping icons representing the functions on a touchscreen, resulting in improvement of user convenience.

What is claimed is:

1. An electronic device comprising:

a camera unit configured to output image data;
a control unit electrically coupled to the camera unit;
a touch screen electrically coupled to the control unit;
a storage unit electrically coupled to the control unit; and
a touch signal processing circuit configured:
to determine a position of a touch on the touch screen,
and
to output position data corresponding to the position of
the touch,

wherein the storage unit stores instructions that, when
executed, cause the control unit:

to display a button on a first screen displayed on the
touch screen, the first screen including a camera appli-
cation icon,
to display a menu including one or more icons in
response to a first touch input on the button, the menu
overlying the first screen,
to activate a camera application in response to a second
touch input on the camera application icon,
to display an image on the touch screen, using the cam-
era application, based on the image data from the
camera unit, the button overlying the image,
to display a generally rectangular indicator overlying the
displayed image on the touch screen, and
to perform focusing of the image in response to a third
touch input on the touch screen.

2. The electronic device of claim 1, wherein the instruc-
tions further cause the control unit to capture the image after
locking the image for a predetermined period of time.

3. The electronic device of claim 2, wherein the instruc-
tions further cause the control unit to display the captured
image on a portion of the touch screen.

4. The electronic device of claim 1, wherein the instruc-
tions further cause the control unit to remove the generally
rectangular indicator after the image is captured.

5. A method of operating an electronic device, the method
comprising:

displaying, by an electronic device including a touch
screen and a camera unit, a button on a first screen
displayed on the touch screen, the first screen including
a camera application icon;

displaying, by the electronic device, a menu including one
or more icons in response to a first touch input on the
button, the menu overlying the first screen;

activating, by the electronic device, a camera application in
response to a second touch input on the camera applica-
tion icon;

displaying, by the electronic device, an image on the touch
screen, using the camera application, based on the image
data from the camera unit, the button overlying the
image;

displaying, by the electronic device, a generally rectangu-
lar indicator overlying the displayed image on the touch
screen; and

performing, by the electronic device, focusing of the image
in response to a third touch input on the touch screen.

6. The method of claim 5, further comprising:

capturing, by the electronic device, the image after locking
the image for a predetermined period of time.

7. The method of claim 6, further comprising:

displaying, by the electronic device, the captured image on
a portion of the touch screen.

8. The method of claim 5, further comprising:

removing, by the electronic device, the generally rectan-
gular indicator after the image is captured.

9. An electronic device comprising:

a camera unit configured to output image data;
a control unit electrically coupled to the camera unit;
a touch screen electrically coupled to the control unit;
a storage unit electrically coupled to the control unit; and
a touch signal processing circuit configured:
to determine a position of a touch on the touch screen,
and
to output position data corresponding to the position of
the touch,

wherein the storage unit stores instructions that, when
executed, cause the control unit:

to display a button on a first screen displayed on the
touch screen, and
to display a menu including one or more icons in
response to a touch input on the button, while remov-
ing the button from the first screen, the menu overly-
ing the first screen.

10. The electronic device of claim 9, wherein the menu
includes a central portion and a first pair of icons positioned
on opposite sides of the central portion.

11. The electronic device of claim 10, wherein the menu
further includes a second pair of icons positioned on opposite
sides of the central portion.

12. The electronic device of claim 9, wherein at least one of
the icons represents an application installed on the electronic
device.

13. The electronic device of claim 12, wherein the instruc-
tions further cause the control unit to activate an application
program in response to a selection of one of the icons.

14. A method of operating an electronic device, the method
comprising:

displaying, by an electronic device including a touch
screen, a button on a first screen displayed on the touch
screen, the first screen including a plurality of icons for
application programs;

receiving, by the electronic device, a first touch input on the
button via the touch screen; and

displaying, by the electronic device, a menu including one
or more icons in response to the first touch input, while
removing the button from the first screen, the menu
overlying the first screen.

15. The method of claim 14, the menu includes a central
portion and a first pair of icons positioned on opposite sides of
the central portion.

16. The method of claim 15, wherein the menu further
includes a second pair of icons positioned on opposite sides of
the central portion.

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17. The method of claim 14, wherein at least one of the icons represents an application installed on the electronic device.

18. The method of claim 17, further comprising:

activating, by the electronic device, an application corresponding to the selected icon in response to a selection of one of the icons.

19. A non-transitory machine-readable storage device storing instructions that, when executed by one or more processors, cause the one or more processors to perform operations comprising:

displaying, by an electronic device including a touch screen and a camera unit, a button on a first screen displayed on the touch screen, the first screen including a camera application icon;

displaying, by the electronic device, a menu including one or more icons in response to a first touch input on the button, the menu overlying the first screen;

activating, by the electronic device, a camera application in response to a second touch input on the camera application icon;

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displaying, by the electronic device, an image on the touch screen, using the camera application, based on the image data from the camera unit, the button overlying the image;

displaying, by the electronic device, a generally rectangular indicator overlying the displayed image on the touch screen; and

performing, by the electronic device, focusing of the image in response to a third touch input on the touch screen.

20. A non-transitory machine-readable storage device storing instructions that, when executed by one or more processors, cause the one or more processors to perform operations comprising:

displaying, by an electronic device including a touch screen, a button on a first screen displayed on the touch screen, the first screen including a plurality of icons for application programs;

receiving, by the electronic device, a first touch input on the button via the touch screen; and

displaying, by the electronic device, a menu including one or more icons in response to the first touch input, while removing the button from the first screen, the menu overlying the first screen.

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